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ABSTRACT

This publication describes the pilot Teacher Dialogue Forums, which provided Georgia teachers with an opportunity to: learn about current research on teaching and the teaching profession; share their views and learn from colleagues; and let their voices be heard and used to shape practice and policy in teaching. A total of 250 teachers participated, along with a few preservice teachers and observers. Facilitators were trained Teachers of the Year and teacher leaders. A set of five multi-part stimulus questions was developed to stimulate discussion at the Forums (e.g., how to organize/reorganize schools and how the messages from three reports on teaching resonated with them as teachers). At the end of the Forums, participants completed evaluations. Teachers appreciated the Forums and the opportunity to discuss teaching in light of current research. Issues that generated the most discussion included: teacher preparation; beginning teachers; professional development; teacher certification; administrative support; teachers as professionals; reorganizing schools; quality core curriculum; school funding and resources; and competitive salaries and teacher incentives. Four appendixes include: a listing of the Georgia Teacher and Teacher-Advocate Steering Committee; stimulus questions; the Teacher Dialogue Forums evaluation form; and Teacher Dialogue Forums site highlights. (SM)

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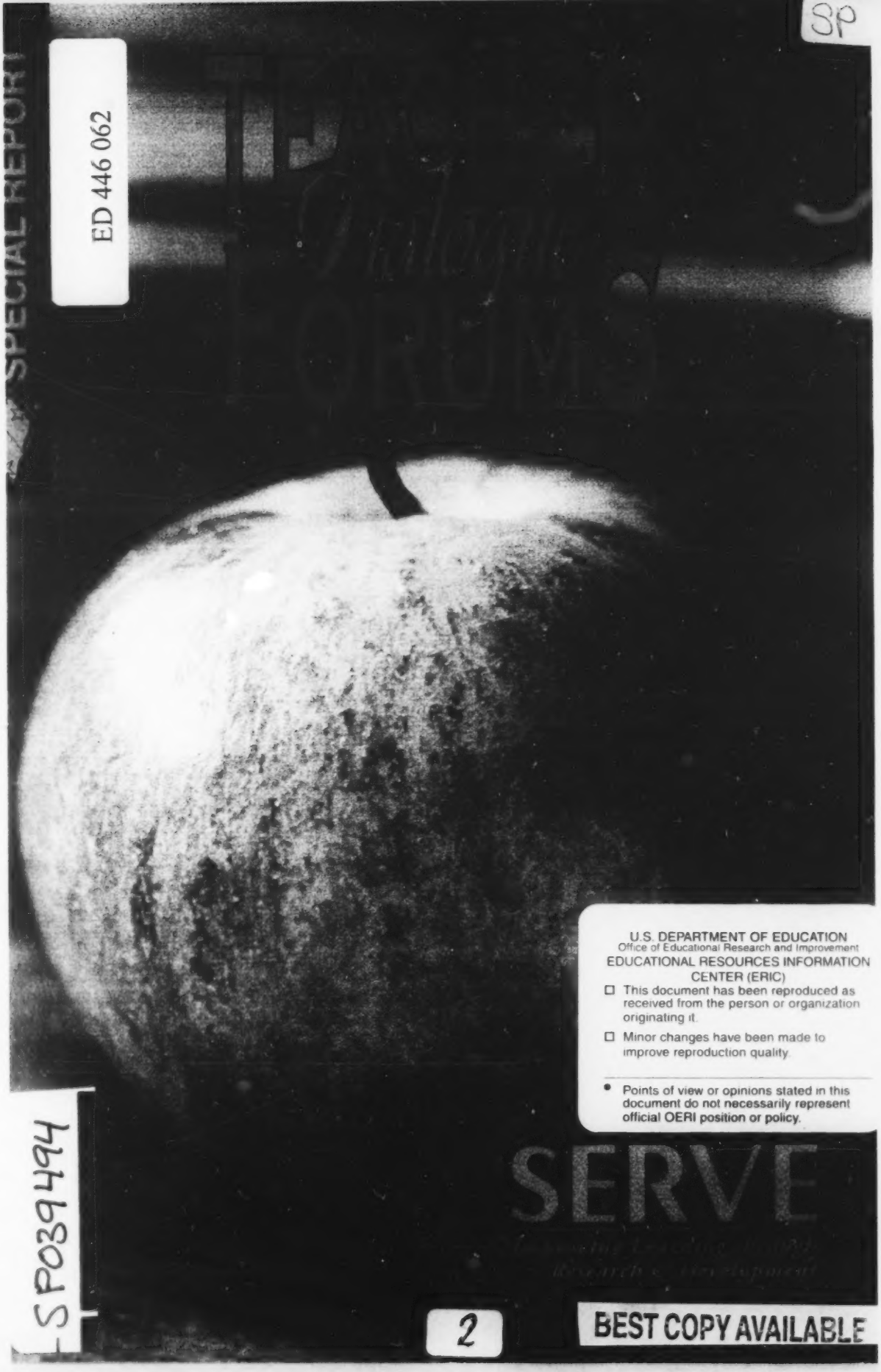

SPECIAL REPORT

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TEACHER FORUMS

The REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY at SERVE

In Association with
The School of Education,
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

1999

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Sincere appreciation is expressed to the membership and staffs of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, the Columbia Group Southeastern Partnership Network, and the Georgia Board of Regents for conducting the research on which the Georgia Teacher Dialogue Forums were based. Special thanks are extended to the staff members from each of these organizations who attended the facilitator training sessions to share research findings and answer questions.

Special recognition is given to the teachers serving on the 12-member committee who conceived the idea of teacher forums and provided referrals for teacher facilitators. Thanks, as well, to the many teacher participants who offered their time and insights to the discussions. Thanks are also extended to the observers who attended the Forums to hear teachers' voices.

Many thanks are extended to Dr. Margaret Torrey and her staff at the Professional Standards Commission for conducting the process used to select the teachers invited to the Forums, to the members of the local chambers of commerce and community collaboratives who secured the facilities used for the Forums, and to the superintendents and principals who encouraged and supported their teachers' participation.

Appreciation and deep gratitude are expressed to the facilitators who so willingly gave of their time and provided guidance and leadership for the Forums in Atlanta, Dalton, Macon, and Statesboro. We would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the following people who made the Forums possible:

Deborah Childs-Bowen, SERVE
Diane Hopkins, GPEE
Gayla Rouse, SERVE
Tom Upchurch, GPEE
Kathy Walker, SERVE
Megan Walsh, GPEE

And, most importantly, thanks and appreciation are extended to the in-service teachers and pre-service teachers who gave so generously of their time and expertise to candidly share their thoughts about the profession they love.

Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GPEE)
SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE)

TEACHER DIALOGUE FORUMS

"What teachers know and do is the most important influence on what students learn."

—National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996

Research of the past decade confirms that teacher expertise is the single most important factor in student achievement. But the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future in its 1996 report, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, found that

> The school reform movement has ignored the obvious: what teachers know and can do makes the crucial difference in what children learn. And the ways school systems organize their work makes a big difference in what teachers can accomplish. New courses, tests, and curriculum reforms can be important starting points, but they are meaningless if teachers cannot use them productively. Policies can improve schools only if the people in them are armed with the knowledge, skills, and supports they need.

One way to determine the type of assistance that a person needs is to engage him or her in a meaningful discussion on the matter. However, the input of teachers is often overlooked in the midst of the many school improvement efforts that are underway. Two organizations are seeking to change this situation through collaboration: the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GPEE) and the SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE). Through their Teacher Dialogue Forums, they are providing an environment in which teachers can talk frankly with other teachers about issues and concerns and make recommendations to improve education in Georgia.

PURPOSE

The idea of holding teacher forums was one of several recommendations made by a 12-member, representative group of Georgia teachers and teacher advocates who met in 1997 to discuss and advance the issue of teacher development. (See Appendix A for a list of members.) In 1998, GPEE joined with SERVE to create and pilot the first Teacher Dialogue Forums. The purpose of these Forums was to provide teachers with an opportunity to

- Learn about current and relevant research on teaching and the teaching profession

- ❖ Share their views and learn from the perspectives of their colleagues
- ❖ Let their voices be heard and used to shape practice and policy in the teaching profession

PROCEDURE

Because these first Forums were pilots, the number of invitees was limited to 250 teachers from across the state. The Professional Standards Commission (PSC) was asked to randomly select the teachers, ensuring that they represented a range of experience and certificate levels.

A few pre-service teachers were also invited, as were a small number of observers (including business leaders, media reporters, university/college of education personnel, and State Department of Education staff).

Site managers, who were responsible for site logistics, were selected from the staffs of GPEE and SERVE. Local chambers of commerce and community collaboratives secured facilities for the Forums. The facilitators, who presented research findings and led the discussions, were selected from Teachers of the Year and other groups of recognized teacher leaders. Prior to the Forums, these classroom teachers attended a training session to discuss facilitating techniques, clarify their roles and responsibilities, and review three research reports:

1. *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (September 1996), a report by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future that offers a blueprint for recruiting, preparing, and supporting excellent teachers in all of America's schools

2. *Teachers & Teaching in the Southeast* (November 1997), a report by the Columbia Group, a consortium of business and educational leaders from the Southeast, that looks at the current status of teachers and teaching in eight southeastern states (including Georgia) and reviews the National Commission's report from a regional perspective

3. *Status of Teaching in Georgia* (March 1998), a report by the Georgia P-16 Council that provides an overview and current status of teachers and teaching in Georgia in light of the National Commission's recommendations

Copies of these reports were sent to each invited teacher, along with a letter of invitation. Letters were also sent to school superintendents requesting them to promote the attendance of Forum invitees in their districts.

FORMAT

The staffs of GPEE and SERVE developed a set of five multi-part stimulus questions, which were used to focus and stimulate discussion among the attending in-service and pre-service teachers. At the end of the Forums, each participant was given the opportunity to submit written comments to the stimulus questions and to complete an evaluation form. (See Appendix B for the list of stimulus questions and Appendix C for a copy of the evaluation form.)

ATTENDANCE

PARTICIPANTS

The first Teacher Dialogue Forums were held simultaneously on the afternoon of May 5, 1998, in Atlanta, Dalton, Macon, and Statesboro, Georgia. Forty-four teachers and 11 pre-service teachers attended statewide. (A breakdown is given in the table below.) The participants reflected a variety of grade, subject, and experience levels, and they represented both rural and urban school districts. Media specialists, coaches, and special education teachers—as well as regular classroom teachers—attended.

Teacher Dialogue Forums Attendance
May 5, 1998

Attendees	Forum Locations				
	Atlanta	Dalton	Macon	Statesboro	State
Participants: Teachers	12	8	9	15	44
Participants: Pre-service	7	0	4	0	11
Observers	9	0	2	1	12
Facilitators	4	2	2	2	10
Managers	1	1	1	1	4
Total	33	11	18	19	81

ATTENDANCE FACTORS

- Although mailed in advance to the school sites, many of the invitees said in follow-up telephone surveys that they had not received their letters of invitation until well after the event.
- Due to the many end-of-year student activities that take place in May, many respondents indicated that it is difficult for teachers to attend out-of-school functions at that time.
- While some schools required teachers to use a personal leave day to attend, others counted it as a professional leave day.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The teachers at all four sites remarked that this was the first time that they had been asked directly for their input on education issues. They appreciated the opportunity to come together to share their experiences, observations, and recommendations in a safe, collegial setting where their input was considered meaningful.

Teachers also commented that they were pleased that the Forums focused on discussing the teaching profession in light of current research. They said, had it not been for the Forums, most would have been unaware of the reports released by the National Commission, the Columbia Group, and the Georgia Board of Regents. These reports were used as a springboard to discuss the topics of greatest concern to Georgia teachers. The issues that generated the most discussion are recounted below and embody the recommendations of the participants. (For highlights of the discussions at each of the Forum sites, see Appendix D.)

TEACHER PREPARATION

Program of study. A few participants were in favor of raising the criteria for teacher preparation programs. With the exception of one site, most participants agreed that teacher preparation should be extended to a five-year program that includes a one-year internship. At one of the sites, teachers recommended that the internship include one semester of classroom observations followed by one semester of student teaching. A few participants suggested that students who enter teacher preparation programs should receive personality profiles to determine their effectiveness with children before proceeding too far into their educational degree. Some participants advocated providing teacher education students with more opportunities to work with certified teachers. But almost all of the teachers said that teacher education students should be exposed early in their programs of study to a variety of classroom experiences, which are continued throughout the program.

Coursework. Some participants thought that more subject content courses should be included in teacher preparation programs. Many would like to see more emphasis placed on practice than theory in courses; they want to see professors incorporate effective teaching techniques, such as role-playing. Most participants recommended increasing training in technology and providing more content and methodology in classroom management. Several participants wanted student teachers to be made aware of how a teacher's expression and response to students impact student learning. They also wanted prospective teachers to be taught how to write and implement lesson plans that are realistic and practical.

Accredited Teacher Education Programs

	Total Programs	In NCATE System
AL	30	60%
FL	27	44
GA	34	65
KY	26	42
LA	19	74
MS	15	67
NC	47	100
SC	30	43
USA	1,336	40

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has responsibility for the voluntary accreditation of colleges and universities for the preparation of K-12 teachers and other professional school personnel.

Columbia Group, 11/97

Source: NCATE, "A List of Professionally Accredited Schools, Colleges, and Departments of Education, May 1997"

College professors. Participants felt strongly that college professors should come into K-12 classrooms on a systematic basis to teach. It was suggested that innovative teaching styles be used regularly in college courses—not just the teacher preparation courses.

Recruitment. A few participants supported creating high school intern programs. At one site, teachers suggested that incentives be provided to prospective teachers to encourage them to train in specialty areas—particularly those areas that have shortages.

FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS

The importance of supporting first-year teachers and continuing to foster their learning process was stressed by teachers. Being mentored by a veteran teacher during the first year of teaching was cited as being most helpful. Having an opportunity to review experiences commonly encountered by first-year teachers with a seasoned veteran teacher was also cited as useful. However, participants cautioned that beginning teachers should not be placed with the most challenging students. The participants at one site suggested establishing a support group for new teachers.

Mentoring. Participants lauded the mentoring concept in theory but pointed out that, in practice, teachers with expertise are not always paired

with new teachers nor are teachers with similar job descriptions necessarily paired together. The teachers in attendance said that mentoring could be much more effective if there were clear qualifications or requirements for mentors and mentoring programs.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Responsibility. Participants said that a professional development plan should flow from the school's strategic plan or school improvement plan and that teachers should be the ones to determine what the specifics of that professional development plan will be. Many felt that professional development should be a collective effort to enhance instruction—that teachers should draw effective methodology from one another.

Structure. It was suggested that professional development include on-site visits to other schools, release time to mentor other teachers, and teacher exchange programs. It was also recommended that follow-up visits be made to observe whether training is being put to effective use. Many participants felt strongly that those who attend conferences, seminars, and courses should share their new knowledge with other faculty members.

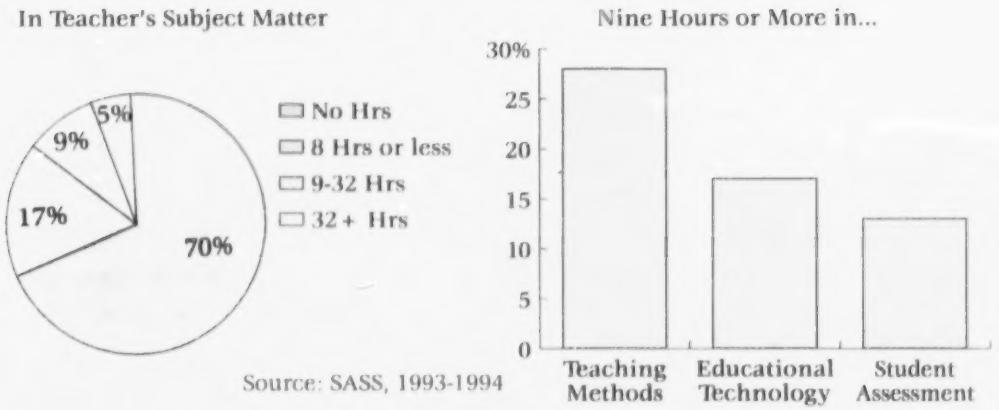
Major Funding Sources 1995-96

	GEORGIA
STATE	$6.9 million: professional development (cost-of-instruction) $22.6 million: professional development stipends $9.2 million: Regional Education Service Agencies
FEDERAL	$6.2 million: Eisenhower $8.9 million: Goals 2000 $10 million: National Science Foundation (5-year grant)
LOCAL	Unlimited transfer of monies between cost-of-instruction and professional development school allocations.

Factoid:
In 1995-96, there were 81,058 teachers (PK-12)
Source: GA Public Education 1995-96 Report Card

Source: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, Teacher Staff Development Profiles, 1996

Professional Development



The data in the charts above reflects professional development hours for teachers in the eight-state region represented in this report. The rapid pace of change in a teacher's field and the explosion of information and technology have placed the need to learn and keep up-to-date at the very heart of all professionals. However, 70% of the teachers in the region reported that they received no professional development in their subject matter over a 12-month period. Professional development hours in the region mirror national averages.
Source: Columbia Group, 11/97

Topic & content areas. Most participants felt that to continue "ratcheting up" student skills and knowledge, teachers must receive continual training. However, teachers feel strongly that, in too many cases, professional development does not address their needs or the needs of their students. They say that much of the training they receive is neither relevant nor practical. Teachers would prefer that more training be subject/content-specific. At one site, participants said that classroom teachers would be encouraged to go back to school for additional training if university courses in content or specialty areas were offered free of charge. A few participants said that teachers should be required to use new technologies and stay current. A number of participants said that it would help more teachers stay current if they could attend professional development during school hours. A few participants remarked that continuing education for teachers should include keeping up with the current trends and interests of students, as well as staying abreast of research and current reports. Some of the topics that teachers recommended for inclusion in professional development include the following:

- Effective teaching strategies
- Use of technology
- New trends/models in education
- Student discipline
- How to include special education students in regular classes
- New ways to address diverse student populations

- ❖ Classroom management
- ❖ How to design and present lessons that appeal to all levels of learning.

Teachers were also interested in professional growth topics, such as time management, stress management, group dynamics, and team building.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION

National standards. Many of the participants agreed that there should be national standards for teachers and said that such standards should be mirrored regionally. Of those teachers who were aware that a National Board for Certification exists, most said that it provides teachers with the opportunity to be rewarded and acknowledged; that such certification holds the promise of elevating the prestige of teachers.

Teaching certificates. Some teachers recommended that the use of certificates be abolished or that certificates remain in effect for a limited time.

Teaching Experience

	Average Years
AL	14
FL	14
GA	13
KY	15
LA	14
MS	14
NC	14
SC	14
USA	16

Source: CPRE Teacher Development Profiles

Teaching out-of-field. Much discussion was generated over teaching out-of-field. Participants expressed concern that teachers who can generate money through athletics, clubs, and events are sometimes placed in instructional settings for which they are unqualified. Several of the participants also said that middle school certification is too general—that it allows teachers to teach subjects in which they did not have concentrated study. They said that there should be minimum requirements for subject area preparation at each grade level. Some of the participants wanted teachers to be placed only in the particular areas in which they specialized or to be trained if they are placed in areas outside their specialization.

Defining Out-of-Field Teaching

	Definition of Out-of-Field Teaching
AL	Teaching outside one's field of certification
FL	Teaching a course for which one lacks appropriate certification
GA	Teaching more than half of the instructional day out-of-field
KY	Teaching in a position for which the individual does not hold appropriate certification
LA	Not meeting certification to teach in at least one specific subject area
MS	Lacking proper endorsements/certification for courses one teaches
NC	Teaching one course per day out of one's licensure area
SC	Teaching outside one's field of certification (subject to transcript analysis)

Source: Southern Regional Education Board and Columbia Group Survey

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Communication. Although some felt that administrators—"from the school board on down"—do not support teachers, most participants agreed that the key to engendering support lies in true two-way communication. The teachers concurred that keeping the lines of communication open with administrators is essential. If administrators are to facilitate the needs of teachers and teaching, it is critical (for school principals, in particular) to stay in touch with teachers' needs. At one site, teachers said this should include supporting teachers in decisions to retain students who are at the point of academic distress.

Classroom exposure. Not only did the participants want student teachers to be exposed to more classroom experiences, they also felt strongly that college professors, administrators, and decision makers should spend time in the classroom. Some commented that too many administrators do not understand what it is like to be in the classroom; teachers are convinced that administrators would make better decisions if they experienced the classroom more regularly.

TEACHERS AS PROFESSIONALS

The "big picture." Many teachers felt that the needs of individual students should be viewed within the context of the whole school—that teachers and administrators should think and operate across subjects and grade levels. Participants noted the need for elementary, middle, and high school teachers to collaborate on objectives. Several felt that these things might be better accomplished if true site-based management was in place.

Teamwork. Teachers were adamant that teacher isolation must end. Most participants preferred that administrators use a team-oriented approach, involving them more in school planning and decision making. They feel they would perform better if they knew that their professional judgment was valued. Teachers want to be able to structure themselves and their surroundings in ways that they feel are most conducive to student learning, including the option of working as both multi-level and same grade-level teams of teachers.

Professionalism. Teachers expressed their wish for others to see them as respected professionals. However, quite a few participants said that they feel powerless as teachers; that they have no authority to impact significant decisions. Although the participants saw the answer to addressing this as being multifaceted, many believe that training teachers to participate in school decision making is the place to start. They strongly recommend that site-based management be considered as a vehicle for improving school performance because then those who are closest to the situation are involved in the decision making. Participants also recommended that teachers be involved in setting standards for their profession and that they be included, through peer reviews, in the certification process.

Time to share and plan. The participants said uniformly and resoundingly that teachers need more time to talk with each other, to share their knowledge, and to collaborate—as they did in the Teacher Dialogue Forums. Teachers would like to have the time to go to their colleagues for advice, support, and assistance.

School improvement. The participants agreed that qualified and certified teachers are a must if children are to thrive. However, at one site, a few felt that when students do not do well in school, their poor performance is pushed aside and not addressed. Others expressed some general frustration with school improvement efforts; they said that more time seems to be spent in planning and talking about making changes than in taking action.

RE-ORGANIZING SCHOOLS

Curricula and student expectations. Participants agreed that high standards should be used to set student expectations. They said that it is important to focus on current student needs and to present **all** students with challenging academic curricula; expectations should not be lowered in order to pass students through the system. However, some thought that more emphasis should be placed on basics, such as reading and mathematics, in elementary school. Furthermore, several participants thought

that, in addition to being certified in a particular field, **all** teachers should be qualified in the basics—especially reading. A few teachers said that gaps in the curriculum should be closed by developing additional standards. Teachers also supported evaluating students' entrance and exit skills to provide diagnostic information.

Student support. Overall, the participants agreed that teachers need to be better prepared for and aware of changing classroom demographics. In addition to providing a support system for at-risk students, participants recommended that academic and other support services be extended to **all** students—not just those who have been "labeled" or "identified." Many participants felt that it is important for students to move at their own pace. However, at one site, teachers said that students should be "organized by levels" or grouped by ability.

Student options and alternatives. Many teachers said that students should have more options to learn based on their learning styles and interests. They contend that students should be encouraged to consider a variety of options after high school that include, but are not limited to, college, technical training, apprenticeships, and military service.

Class size and scheduling. A number of participants recommended reducing class size to allow teachers more opportunity to address individual student needs. Some thought this could be done by having a para-professional in every classroom. Others suggested re-evaluating school scheduling patterns. They suggested looking into extended day, extended year, and year-round calendars as possible ways to support the academic success of students. Several also recommended that teachers be trained in how to teach in year-round situations. Yet at one site, participants said that schools should work on quality first, not quantity.

QUALITY CORE CURRICULUM (QCC)

The new scope and sequence of the Quality Core Curriculum is somewhat clearer, say several teachers. Participants felt that the revised QCC is better aligned and allows more latitude. Many agreed that students should be taught the same content and that there should be more consistency among schools. However, a number of teachers either had not seen the revised QCC objectives or were not aware of their existence. Some felt that using the QCC was optional; others said that the objectives need to be adapted to fit the needs of students. Quite a few of the participants felt that the standards had been lowered or were minimal. However, several expressed concern that by the time a student reaches sixth grade, QCC requires too much—but it does not require enough early on. A few teachers

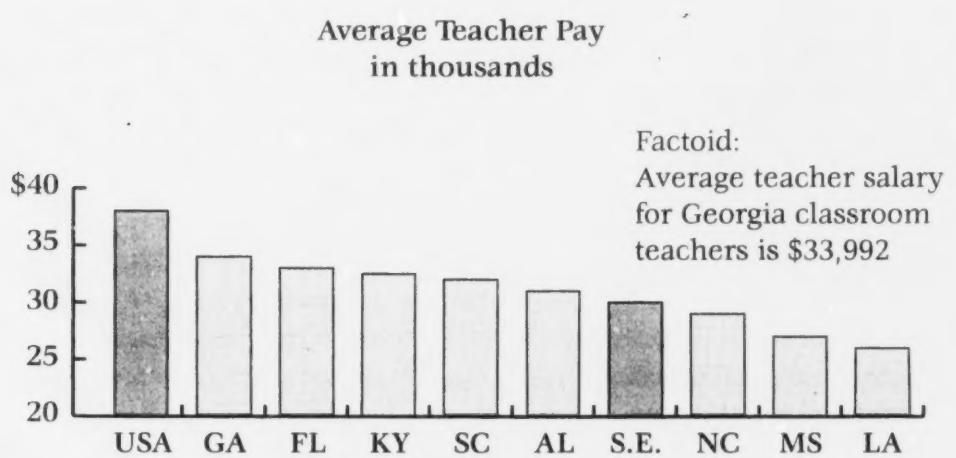
asked whether they were supposed to be teaching to objectives from the QCC or from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), remarking that the two sets of objectives are not correlated. Pre-service student participants commented that they are receiving the message in college classes that the QCC is not adequate.

School Funding and Resources

For the most part, participants affirmed that they have the necessary resources to implement the QCC. However, they cautioned that it really depends on the school as to whether the resources are adequate—some said that teachers still spend money out-of-pocket for supplies. Many of the participants questioned where the money goes in their schools; they did not seem to understand how funds are distributed. However, they are interested in learning more about how funds are allocated and school budgets are derived.

Competitive Salaries and Teacher Incentives

In spite of the annual state raises, participants say that salary as an incentive remains a serious issue for Georgia's teachers. They see the disparity in salaries from school system to school system as a detriment to teacher recruitment. Several participants recommended that merit pay and other incentives be established to keep good teachers in the classroom and encourage new ones to enter. Some of the participants commented that it would serve as an incentive to remove restrictive evaluative measures from good teachers and to be sure that all evaluations are based on objective means rather than subjective ones.



S.E. refers only to the eight states discussed in this report.
Source: NEA Ranking of the States, 1996

Average State-Funded Georgia Teacher Salaries, 1995-96

	Bachelor's	Master's
Beginning Teacher	$21,225	$24,443
5th Year Teacher	24,881	28,610
10th Year Teacher	27,584	31,718
Maximum Salary	31,046	35,700

Average State-Funded Georgia Salaries, 1995-96

Classroom Teachers	$33,992
Principals	37,739
Superintendents	41,120

Sources: Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget and Budget Services Office, Georgia Department of Education

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

It became clear in discussions that for Georgia teachers there are several key issues that permeate everything else:

(1) Valuing teachers for their expertise and experience
(2) Keeping teachers in the communication loop and engaging them in true two-way communication
(3) Restructuring professional development so that it is meaningful and targets the needs of both teachers and students

Participants in the Teacher Dialogue Forums made it evident that the teachers in many of our schools feel isolated and under-appreciated. One factor that contributes to these feelings is poor communication. Many examples of teachers being left out of the communication loop emerged during discussions. For example, a significant number of teachers did not know that the QCC had been revised. Also, quite a few did not understand why Title I funds cannot be used for anything other than low-income children, and many were not aware that (a) there is a National Board for teacher certification and that (b) the State encourages participation.

Teachers suspect that their information may be incomplete; they are concerned that administrators may not always be including them in the information loop. And they fear that professional development is not filling in many gaps for them. Teachers want their continuing education to

include more subject content information and more professional opportunities, such as sharing effective teaching practices and innovative techniques with one another. That is why the four pilot Teacher Dialogue Forums were such a success: they gave teachers the opportunity to share their experiences, observations, and recommendations in an encouraging environment. It is clear that more of these opportunities for teacher involvement and interaction are needed.

The teacher forum concept, with its use of discussions based on research, can be employed as a model for encouraging more local involvement and dialogue; it can be incorporated as a mechanism for staff development at the district and school levels and expanded to include more diverse groups. The possible outgrowth of such forums includes increased communication and meaningful input into policies and professional practice, as well as opportunities for networking.

GPEE in conjunction with SERVE will be offering more Teacher Dialogue Forums in the winter of 1999. In the meantime, this report will be shared, specifically, with the Board of Regents, the Department of Education, and the Professional Standards Commission to shape state policies and professional practice. Copies of the report will also be widely disseminated to teachers and made available to policymakers, members of the private sector, and the public-at-large.

APPENDIX A

GEORGIA TEACHER & TEACHER-ADVOCATE STEERING COMMITTEE

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APPENDIX B

STIMULUS QUESTIONS

1. How do the messages of these three reports *(What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future, Teachers & Teaching in the Southeast,* and *Status of Teaching in Georgia*) resonate with you as a teacher?

2. In what ways could schools be organized/re-organized
   a) To utilize the skills and knowledge of teachers more effectively?
   b) To help teachers provide high-quality instruction to a rapidly changing and increasingly diverse society of children?
   c) To enable all students to be academically successful at high levels?

3. The information presented in these three reports suggests changing the whole continuum of teacher development.
   a) What suggestions do you have about teacher preparation?
   b) What were helpful conditions during your first years of teaching?
   c) What could have made them better?
   d) What would be the professional development plan for you and your co-workers at your school if you could develop and implement the plan?

4. These reports call for high standards for teachers and students. The State of Georgia has recently revised the Quality Core Curriculum with the involvement of the educational community.
   a) Do you have a clear understanding of the concepts you are responsible for teaching in your discipline?
   b) Do you have the necessary resources?

5. The Teacher and Teacher Education Sub-committee of the state P-16 Council is about to develop a strategic plan to address the goal of having a qualified teacher in every classroom by the year 2003.
   a) What recommendations would you provide?
   b) How would you suggest they be implemented for schools and the system as a whole?

APPENDIX C

TEACHER DIALOGUE FORUMS EVALUATION FORM

We hope you enjoyed the *Teacher Dialogue Forum*. Please take a few moments to give us feedback on the following areas so that we will be able to better serve you in the future.

Please rate the following criteria:

Helpfulness of Facilitator

❑ Excellent ❑ Good ❑ Satisfactory ❑ Fair ❑ Poor

Comments: _____

_____

Relevance of Information

❑ Excellent ❑ Good ❑ Satisfactory ❑ Fair ❑ Poor

Comments: _____

_____

Quality of the Dialogue Process

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Comments: _____

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Comments: _____

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Time of Delivery

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Comments: _____

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Over, please

This forum has had or will have the following impact:
(please check all that apply):

- ❑ Increased my awareness of important new skills and knowledge
- ❑ Will be used to inform decision-making planning
- ❑ Will be used to change or enhance the quality of professional practices
- ❑ Will positively affect student performance

Was the forum inviting? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Suggestions _____

_____

Should similar activities be held in the future? ❑ Yes ❑ No

What issues would you like to be covered? _____

_____

_____

Other areas of the state that should be considered as site(s) _____

_____

_____

What are some suggested methods for sharing this information with other teachers? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX D

TEACHER DIALOGUE FORUMS SITE HIGHLIGHTS

ATLANTA

Site Facilitators: Kay Hollifield, Janine Kaste, and Brenda Palmer

Teachers should be the ones to make decisions in the classroom. Admission criteria should be raised, and teacher preparation programs should be increased to five years. Programs should include one full year of internship and more classroom experiences prior to student teaching. Coursework should include less theory, more technology training, and more content in classroom management. Once in the classroom, first-year teachers can be supported by pairing them with mentors and by organizing support groups specifically for new teachers. Teacher isolation and burn-out can be lessened by giving teachers more time to interact with one another, by increasing two-way communication with administrators—particularly principals—and by offering a range of opportunities for renewal.

For instance, consider allowing teachers to teach in school the first half of the year and travel around the community to teach in the second half. Also consider offering staff development during school hours and university courses free of charge. To sustain new teaching behaviors, provide follow-up visits and activities. Teachers feel that higher quality classroom instruction can be delivered by *requiring* teachers to stay current and use new technologies, by setting high expectations for students, and providing authentic learning that really involves the students. Teachers also recommend reducing class-size and considering year-round schooling. As to QCC, opinions vary; some think it is not required, while others say it is needed for lesson plans.

DALTON

Site Facilitators: Kay W. New and Nonnie Weeks

It would be beneficial to expand teacher preparation to a five-year program that includes more classroom experiences, more classroom management methodology, some portfolio assessment, and a full-year internship.

However, more incentives will be needed to get teachers into the classroom. Consider crediting the internship as one year of teaching experience. Support teachers as professionals by encouraging them to participate in National Board certification. Provide teachers with more access to professional development opportunities, and encourage them to draw effective methodology from one another. Train the best teachers to be mentors and pair them with new teachers. Give teachers more time to plan with their peers and allow them to work in teams; isolation must end. To provide high-quality instruction to all students, reduce class size, put a para-professional in every classroom, and change books in a timely manner. Some teachers also recommend considering year-round schooling. Teachers say to adopt consistent standards and high expectations for grades K-12 and *stick to them*. Provide academic and other types of support to *all* students; help students and their parents consider multiple options after high school, which include post-secondary technical education and apprenticeships, as well as college. All teachers should be qualified in the basics—especially reading—as well as in their certified fields. As for the new QCC, teachers say it gives more latitude, but that it should be correlated with ITBS objectives.

MACON

Site Facilitators: Jennifer Funderburk and Gwen Williams

Teachers want to be treated as professionals: involve them in school decision making, invite them to participate in certification through peer reviews, and keep them in the communication loop. School systems and administrators should actively encourage teachers to earn National Board Certification and give them more time to plan and share knowledge with their peers. Teachers would like to see administrators become more team-oriented; they want to lend their expertise to creating staff development programs and school improvement plans. They say that professional development is often equated with certification renewal or advanced degree work—not for enhanced subject area training and practical strategies that they would like to apply in the classroom.

Professional leave should allow teachers to visit other schools, attend professional conferences, and participate in teacher exchanges. After attending conferences, seminars, and courses, teachers should share what they have learned with others. In regard to teacher preparation programs, veteran teachers say that classroom experiences should be incorporated from the very beginning and that the supervising teachers of interns should be trained as mentors.

To provide high-quality instruction to all students, teachers should be allowed enough time to reinforce the concepts that students have not mastered—this might be accomplished through alternative patterns of school and class scheduling. Equity across schools is also an issue; teachers would like to know more about how school resources are allocated. They ask that more competitive salaries be offered to teachers and that a step be added to the salary schedule.

STATESBORO

Facilitators: Elizabeth Bland and Deborah Mills

Teacher morale can be lifted by involving teachers in school decision making and allowing them more time to share and collaborate with one another. A case in point is the professional development plan: it should be the result of a collaborative effort among teachers. Teacher instruction should be comprised of clinically realistic situations delivered by a variety of trainers, including other teachers and people from the business community. Teachers want training to include information on mainstreaming special education students, using teaching models that incorporate technology, and designing lessons that appeal to all levels of learning. They would also like personal growth topics to be offered, such as the psychology of group dynamics. Although veteran teachers would like to see more opportunities provided for student teachers and certified teachers to work together, they feel that a one-year internship is unreasonable; they believe that Georgia teachers are already receiving good preparation. They say that new teachers should be supported by having seasoned veteran teachers review experiences commonly encountered in the first years of teaching with them. They support the concept of mentoring but assert that specific qualifications should be established to become a mentor. Teachers would like to see any gaps in the curriculum closed by standards; they recommend that students move at their own pace. Although teachers said that the QCC standards had been lowered, many had not seen the revised QCC.

ABOUT THE SERVE ORGANIZATION

SERVE is an educational organization whose mission is to promote and support the continual improvement of educational opportunities for all learners in the Southeast. To address this mission, SERVE engages in research and development in educational issues of critical importance to educators in the region, and in the provision of research-based services to SEAs and LEAs that are striving for comprehensive school improvement. Committed to a shared vision of the future of education in the region, the organization is governed by a board of directors that includes the chief state school officers, governors, and legislative representatives from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina, and representatives of teachers and the private sector.

SERVE's core component is a Regional Educational Laboratory funded since 1990 by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. SERVE has additional major funding from the Department in the areas of Migrant Education and School Leadership and is the lead agency in the Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Consortium for the Southeast and the Southeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (SEIR◆TEC). Based on these grants and contracts, SERVE has developed a system of programs and initiatives that provides a spectrum of resources, services, and products for responding to local, regional, and national needs. These program areas are

- Program on Assessment, Accountability, and Standards
- Program for Children, Families, and Communities
- Program on Education Policy
- Program for the Improvement of Science and Mathematics Education
- Program on School Development and Reform
- Program on Technology in Learning
- Initiative on Teachers and Teaching

SERVE's National Specialty Area is Early Childhood Education, and the staff of SERVE's Program for Children, Families, and Communities is developing the expertise and the ability to provide leadership and support to the early childhood community nationwide for children from birth to age eight.

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SERVE's main office is at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, with major staff groups located in Tallahassee, Florida, and Atlanta, Georgia. Policy advisors are in each state department of education in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Current and detailed information on any of the program and service areas noted here may be found on SERVE's site on the World Wide Web at www.serve.org or by contacting our main office below.

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